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Publication date:
2016

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Jensen, I., & Andersen, V. (2016). *A postcolonial perspective on well educated refugees in Denmark*. Abstract from Social exclusion, Postcolonial perspectives, and Discrimination, København, Denmark.

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SEAL conference

October 6. th 2016

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A post colonial perspective on well educated refugees on the Danish labour market

In general, integration is hampered if refugees do not have a sufficient educational background to enter the labor market. However, it is estimated by Danish authorities that around 13% of the refugees have a professional background in medicine, technical domains or engineering (The ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing). In Denmark efforts of integrating refugees can be accommodated by the fact that there is a shortage of highly skilled labor – mainly in the area of engineering and it-experts. This seems to be a perfect match, as the refugees hold the education and are eager to work.

However, based on former studies on integration on labour market in Europe (Ahmed 2010, Jensen 2014) and the everyday discourses on refugees in Denmark we foresee that despite the refugees hold qualifying education they will be challenged by mechanisms of social exclusion in ongoing practices in the workplace.

The paper aims to discuss how this situation – a perfect match between skills and demand for job - can be seen from a post colonial perspective. A post colonial perspective is referring to a discursive system which maintain differences between The West and the rest – us versus them, which Stuart Hall debated with his famous article "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power," 1996. Also the work of Edward Said arguing how the orient has been constructed as barbarian, non rational, mysterious and static, which has constructed West as rational, democratic and dynamic (Said 2004) will be discussed in relation to the position refugees in the Danish labour market is supposedly offered. The work of Gayatri Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak? will also be included.

Based upon former studies of immigrants at the Danish labour market the idea is to discuss the assumed resistance to new colleagues from a post colonial perspective. Will a post colonial perspective shed new light on negotiations of positions at the work place? Will class or gender positions could be seen differently? Will there be patterns in the way 'the other' is criticized?